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Editors' Introduction:

Towards a Queer Philology

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Between Manuscripts

Intertwined ideas of authority and masculinity are foundational to traditional accounts of canon formation. This much is well known, and it is exemplified, to give one famous example, in Howard Bloom's study, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Bloom, 1973), in which, focusing primarily on post-medieval (and indeed initially on post-early modern) male poets, Bloom applied a Freudian model of Oedipal conflict to the relationships between different generations of writers. What is less widely acknowledged is the possibility that our understanding of the status of and relationships between medieval manuscripts, the very codices in which early literature was copied and circulated, has a comparable patriarchal underpinning. This Special Issue takes recognition of this possibility or even inevitability as its starting point, and seeks to challenge it, and in so doing to offer new ways of thinking about manuscripts and of reading and interpreting texts. In seeking to disrupt conventional conceptualizations of the relationships between medieval manuscripts, this Special Issue sets out to offer what we think of as a new codicology, a queer philology, whose epistemology is founded on dissonance, instability, and misprision rather than on the teleological linearity of Bloom's patriarchal paradigm.

While Bloom himself suggested that premodern writers did not feel the same need to assert the originality of their own work, it is in fact impossible to avoid

applying this paradigm to late medieval literature, as Geoffrey Chaucer, famously identified as the ‘Father of English Poetry’ by John Dryden in the 18th century (Dryden, 1700, [7]), was cast as the patriarch of the English literary canon by one of his immediate successors, the poet-bureaucrat Thomas Hoccleve in his *Regiment of Princes* (Blyth, 1999). Indeed, a so-called quarrel between Geoffrey Chaucer and his contemporary and fellow poet, John Gower, has also been figured in terms of actual or at least metaphorical rivalry (Fisher, 1965; Dinshaw, 1991). Chaucer and Gower both mention each other in some of their major works: *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *Confessio Amantis*, respectively, and Chaucer also apparently alludes to Gower’s poetry in the Introduction to the Man of Law’s Tale in *The Canterbury Tales*. Yet the function of this name-checking is far from straightforward. Paradoxically, a preoccupation with deviation and misprision becomes apparent in Chaucer’s famous dedication of *Troilus and Criseyde* to ‘moral Gower’ (Benson, 1988, V.1856; all in-text references to Chaucer’s works are to this edition), whose authority is called upon to rectify or straighten the very possibility of error:

O moral Gower, this book I directe
 To the and to the, philosophical Strode,
 To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to correcte,
 Of youre benignites and zeles goode.
 And to that sothfast Crist, that starf on rode (V.1856-1860)

A rhetoric of unidirectionality, control and legitimization marks the passage, as Chaucer prepares to release anxiously his verses to the world. It is not only the moral potency of Gower or the philosophical integrity of Strode that Chaucer evokes, but

also the redemptive intervention of Christ on the cross who possesses the power to ‘circumscribe’ (V.1865) or to contain the spectre of sinful error. As the rhyme suggests, late medieval authorship is underpinned by a preoccupation with the rectification of error. The rhyming verbs ‘directe’ and ‘correcte’ articulate an apparent desire for a straight directionality; this spatial configuration of writerly agency chimes with queer theories of place and identity as oriented or directed in space. Sara Ahmed, for instance, describes heteronormative or familial relations spatially as ‘directional metaphors’ (Ahmed, 2006, 75) establishing a ‘line of descent’ (Ahmed, 2006, 73) originating from the father’s authority and identifying with him. Any error is therefore seen as a manifestation of (spatial and sexual) deviance from the normative which provokes ‘*an injury to the father*’ (Ahmed, 2006, 74). Ultimately, as the articles in this Special Issue demonstrate, it is the ubiquity of the queer in medieval literary culture that Chaucer articulates in *Troilus* and elsewhere. Error, which requires re-orientation, or direction and correction, is, nonetheless, also encountered as a potential source of queer pleasure with its ludic scrambling of patriarchal structures rather than their reproduction. In fact, much like Gower’s moral authority will subsequently reveal itself to be ‘amoral’ in his later poem *Confessio Amantis* (Watt, 2003), so divine authority also reveals itself to be ‘uncircumscribed’ (V.1865) [our italics] or boundless, unshackled, perfectly fluid in the multidiscursivity of the Trinity – ‘Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve’ (V.1863), or one and three, monolithic and disjunctive at once. Chaucer figures the ultimate representation of *auctoritas*, that of God, as adirectional and unmoored.

Chaucer’s apparent deference to Gower at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* is complicated further in the Introduction to the Man of Law’s Tale in which Chaucer has his pilgrim seemingly reject Gower out of hand for the *immorality* of his

narratives, because his works concern themselves with ‘unkynde abhomynacions’ [‘unnatural and loathsome sins’] (II.88) such as rape and incest. That this accusation should not be taken entirely seriously, however, is indicated by the way in which the Man of Law portrays himself as Chaucer’s successor while simultaneously dismissing the poet as one who ‘kan but lewedly / On metres and on rymyng craftily’ (II.47-48). When, a few years later, Gower completed the first version of his own major vernacular poem, *Confessio Amantis*, in a passage subsequently excised, he continued the joke, and envisaged Venus as offering an invitation to Gower to ‘gret wel Chaucer whan ye mete’ (VIII.*2941), and to urge Chaucer to follow Gower’s own patriarchal lead and complete his unfinished works:

That he upon his latere age,
To sette an ende of alle his werk,
As he which is myn owne clerk,
Do make his testament of love,
As thou has do thi schrifte above,
So that mi Court it may recorde (*VIII.2952-57)

Gower here effectively and wittily assumes for himself the position of the Father of English poetry, relegating Chaucer to that of emulator or follower.

Yet behind this apparently light-hearted exchange are more serious concerns. In the Introduction to the Man of Law’s Tale, the pilgrim also positions Chaucer at the beginning of an already saturated vernacular literary lineage by expressing his own authorial anxiety of influence directed at the poet’s extensive literary production (‘What sholde I tellen hem, syn they been tolde?’; II.56). The Man of Law’s act of ironic defiance of Chaucer’s *paternitas* brings into focus the two poets’ shared anxiety about the threat of error and usurpation of literary authority:

But nathelees, I recche noght a bene

Though I come after hym with hawebake.

I speke in prose, and lat him rymes make. (II.94-6)

Literary patrilineage is called into question, as the Man of Law refuses to show deference to his predecessor's poetic authority; with his adversative clause, the Man of Law disrupts the logical linearity of his filial relationship with Father Chaucer. Despite being his successor, he refuses to perpetuate unquestioningly Chaucer's literary practices, and does so both stylistically and formally. In fact, his dissonant use of two consecutive idiomatic phrases overtly challenges Chaucer's authority and his *gravitas* by trivializing concerns with his refusal to acknowledge the poet's excellence. The humble 'bene' and the 'hawebake', or baked hawthorn berries (a meagre fare, indeed), are symbols of his proud defiance of poetic conventions and as such scramble the monolithic authority of the emerging vernacular canon. The deliberate choice of prose can also be construed as an act of resistance to these hegemonic forces. The fact, however, that, despite his protestations, the Man of Law uses *rime royale*, a sophisticated poetic form far removed from the basic provisions he promises, problematizes the representation of truth and authority further. This dissonance or error brings into focus a preoccupation with the instability of meaning or queer hermeneutics that pervades the narrative. The Man of Law's rebellious act sheds light on the futility of the male rivalry between the two poets who are both equally susceptible to the vagaries of an uncertain futurity in the unreliable hands of defiant successors, erratic readers and careless scribes.

That futurity is realized in the surviving manuscripts and editions of Chaucer and Gower's poetry. Yet it is immediately striking that despite the multiplicity of different versions and witnesses, in the 21st century certain codices dominate the continued circulation and reception of their major works, and furthermore that the perceived rivalry between the two poets is mirrored in a similar perceived rivalry between the most 'authoritative' manuscripts. Thus within the field of scholarship on *The Canterbury Tales*, the two oldest and most complete manuscripts are set up in competition with one another: the Hengwrt manuscript (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Peniarth MS 392 D; c.1400) and Ellesmere (San Marino, California, Huntington Library MS EL 26 C 9; c.1400). Similarly (if to a lesser extent), within scholarship on *Confessio Amantis*, the two manuscripts that are seen to be closest of Gower's final design are figured in terms of a comparable relationship: Fairfax (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 3 (c.1400)) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 902 (first quarter of the 15th century). Just as the canon is conceived of in terms of patrilineage and descent, so too is the textual stemma, with the archetype having the status of a common literary forefather. In other words, this rivalry 'between manuscripts' is a manifestation of the relations 'between men' which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explores in her study of male homosociality (Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1985). Martin Stevens, the principal scholarly voice in support of Ellesmere's superiority over Hengwrt, which is instead considered the 'best text' by N. F. Blake (Blake, 1979), declares that 'the Hengwrt/Ellesmere *dispute* [our italics] has become a classic in the field of textual criticism' (Stevens and Woodward, 1997, 22). This framing of philology and codicology as (conflicting) relations between manuscripts is, we argue, profoundly patriarchal. As Sedgwick explains, rivalry between men consolidates their bonds and highlights what is really at stake: 'men promoting the

interest of men' (1985, 4) and 'maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power' (Sedgwick, 1985, 25). The Hengwrt/Ellesmere dispute, in fact, eschews collaborative, refracted, non-binary modes of textuality, and thus silences the queer, non-dominant, voices articulated in other manuscripts and within these very 'seminal' manuscripts.

This Special Issue sets out to complicate, and thus to queer, such an engrained conventional and masculinist way of approaching medieval manuscript witnesses. It seeks to overturn the way we approach both texts and manuscripts, by suggesting that we focus instead on the fissures, lapses and gaps that, according to Carolyn Dinshaw (1989, 90) reveal the limits, and thus the workings, of patriarchal ideology. Such disjunctions expose the energy of suppression and exclusion and the efforts at reconciliation of contradictions that are necessary to patriarchal ideology's construction of itself as a seemingly seamless, coherent, and natural whole. Nonetheless, while Dinshaw reads such fissures, lapses and gaps principally as sites of heteronormative policing of queer identities, we contend that it is in these interstices that such queer identities can be, albeit fleetingly, imagined.

Rethinking Philology

As Chaucer's and Gower's own playful scepticism of patriarchal modes of accounting for canon formation demonstrates, such paradigms fail to account for the hermeneutic slippages, temporal and spatial disjunctures, and queer subject positions on which manuscript production and medieval literary culture, more broadly, are predicated. This Special Issue seeks, instead, to put forward a queer philology that pushes forward the case that Dinshaw argued over 25 years ago in *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (1989). Although her feminist and queer readings of Chaucer's works have been tremendously influential, her call to queer the poet's manuscripts has gone largely

(and surprisingly) unanswered. As long as manuscript studies and philology in general continue to be dominated by masculinist discourses of rivalry, the field will remain elitist and conservative, as it will focus on ring-fencing privilege and its default identity: white, able-bodied, straight, male and Christian. As Sedgwick argues, ‘the bonds that link males to males, and by which males enhance the status of males’ (3) reproduce hegemonic subject positions at the expense of the queer, here intended capaciously as the non-normative. The heteronormative privilege repressing the queer and erasing its presence at the very heart of medieval literary culture is precisely what this Special Issue sets out to unpack and scramble in the hope to contribute to a more inclusive figuration of medieval studies and its academic community.

Since the publication of *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics*, a number of persuasive and field-changing studies have framed medieval cultural through the lens of queer theory in generative ways, including Dinshaw’s own subsequent key contributions to the field (1999, 2012). Alongside some of the contributors to this Special Issue, such as Diane Watt (2003), Anna Kłosowska (2005) and Watt with Noreen Giffney and Michelle M. Sauer (2011), other critics, namely Robert Sturges (2000), Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (2001), Burger (2003), Tyson Pugh (2004) and Karma Lochrie (2005), to mention but a few, have made visible the queer possibilities latent in medieval texts. Building on this important work, it is, in fact, medieval textuality that these articles set out to read through a framework offered by contemporary queer theories. In particular, manuscript culture with its disjunctures, non-linear processes of production and dissemination, pleasures found in errors, its complex and refracted networks of professional agents and readers, and the non-binary subject positions which it accommodates cannot, we argue, be fully accounted for by applying traditional philological paradigms. Based on a scientific quantitative process, the

Lachmann method, also known as stemmatics, rationalizes manuscript transmission and textuality in teleological schemata that visualize relations between codices according to genealogical lines of transmission. A key figure of 19th-century textual scholarship, Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) describes the textual history of *De Rerum Natura*, which he first edited in 1850, in these unequivocally patriarchal terms with which he opens his Preface: ‘Ante hos mille annos in quadam Regni Francici parte unum supererat Lucretiani carminis exemplar antiquum, e quo cetera, quorum post illa tempora memoria fuit, deducta sunt’ [Over a thousand years ago, in a certain part of the kingdom of France, one ancient copy of the Lucretian poem existed from which others, of which there was a memory after those times, are descended] (Lachmann, 1855, 1; our translation). A rhetoric of heteronormativity and repronormativity, and patrilineality more specifically, is deployed to group manuscripts into ‘families’ of originals and derivatives; these derivatives are, in turn, chastised for their inferior and corrupt status which removes them further away from the fetishized authorial original. Scribal error is at once used to establish such relations, but it is also lamented as a form of deviation from the uncorrupted textuality of the manuscript progenitor. A rupture in the teleological line of descent between manuscript witnesses, error is the sign of a lamentable corruption which is textual and moral at once, as it distances the reader from the authorial ancestor as principle of truthful signification. These patriarchal paradigms are reified in genealogical diagrams such as stemmas or trees, all aiming at satisfying the desire to retrieve the lost original, or the ‘father’ of a textual tradition and its source of stable hermeneutics. A serviceable, rational and widely used method, stemmatics is still a dominant strategy to account for textual history. For instance, Daniel W. Mosser’s 2011 digital catalogue of the manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* remains heavily reliant on the traditional Lachmann method

and genealogical trees. Notwithstanding its longevity and durability, stemmatics, we argue, would certainly benefit from the sustained scrutiny offered by the alternative paradigms articulated in the articles gathered in this Special Issue, as they raise questions about the complex processes of manuscript production in the later Middle Ages and offer more expansive methodologies.

Raptures from the Lachmann method have punctuated 20th-century textual scholarship: from Joseph Bédier (1864-1934) and his theory of the ‘best text’, or the identification of an existing single manuscript providing authoritative readings (however defined) and replacing the elusive ancestor sought through stemmatics, to the works of Jerome McGann (1983, 1985, 1991) and D. F. McKenzie (1986) which focuses on the ‘sociology of the text’, that is, the collaborative quality of manuscript and literary production rather than on teleological and patriarchal structures informing stemmas. As Tim Machan argues, despite such departures, textual studies have remained largely a traditional field in which ‘potentially disruptive traditions such as Middle English have been reformulated in a fashion that consolidates humanist assumptions [of author, work and text]’ (Machan, 1994, 178). Such a fundamental preservation of masculinist and patriarchal imperatives was challenged again in the 1990s by Stephen G. Nichols’s call for a ‘New Philology’ (Nichols, 1990). As Nichols puts it in a recent reflection on the methodology he developed, the linearity of traditional philology does not offer an apt framework through which to read ‘the dynamics of the parchment page’ as ‘an interactive space inviting continual representational and interpretative activity’ (Nichols, 2015, 39). Similarly, recent interventions on the textual scholarship of the later Middle Ages have renewed an interest in the composite quality of medieval manuscripts; building on the works of Julia Boffey and John Thompson (1989) and Margaret Connolly (2011), among

others, textual critics such as Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin (2011), Arthur Bahr (2013), and Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (2015) reflect on the (in)adequacy of nomenclature (e.g. anthology, compilation, miscellany, assemblage etc.) to account for the plurality and constant slippage in a manuscript's *compilatio* and, therefore, its teleology and intentionality. Bahr's astute and convincing harnessing of poststructuralist and cultural materialist theories leads the way towards generative new methodologies capable of capturing the *mouvance*, or intrinsic variance, of manuscript culture, as posited by Paul Zumthor (1972) and Bernard Cerquiglini (1999). Despite offering a sustained theorization of medieval textuality and its rhizomatic processes, we argue that more can (and ought to) be done to put forward a radical new queer philology underpinned by a queer historiography.

This Special Issue marshals important work on queer temporality and sexuality, and aligns itself with Jack Halberstam's critique of linear time as heteronormative which, in its ineludible 'straight' trajectory, excludes all non-normative subject positions. Much like stemmas and genealogical trees used to reify manuscript relations as patrilineal and patriarchal, heteronormative time casts history as an inescapable familial narrative following, as Halberstam would put it, the 'paradigmatic manners of experience – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death' (Halberstam, 2005, 2). We associate our methodology with 'affective historiography' (Chakrabarty, 2000, 18), specifically to the ways in which lesbian scholarship has painstakingly exploded patriarchal privilege to allow female-coded, queer, and non-normative identities to be accounted for. Dinshaw (1999), Ahmed (2006), Lara Farina (2006), Elizabeth Freeman (2010), Giffney, Sauer and Watt (2011), and Rebecca Schneider (2011) are among the critics who have harnessed same-sex desire to offer a more capacious and resonant analysis of sexuality, gender,

time, and literary traditions. Pushing forward Dinshaw's calls for a queer touch between communities across time and space (Dinshaw, 1999, 1), Freeman elaborates a queer, more specifically lesbian, historiography founded on the erotic practices and pleasures of female same-sex desire. She posits: 'this suggests ... the potential for collective queer time – even queer history – to be structured on uneven transmission of receptivity rather than authority or custom, of a certain enjoyable porous relation to unpredictable futures or to new configurations of the past' (Freeman, 2010, 109). It is the hand and the finger more specifically with its erotically-charged tactility which she identifies as a new methodological tool for a historiography that desires/touches the past (Freeman, 2010, 105-111). Much like Lachmann's ancestor, here the past is not conceptualized as a distant (elusive, lost, irretrievable) atom in/of time arranged along a teleological line; rather, history and the manuscript, its textual relic, can be encountered sensorially and can indeed be touched or, more accurately in the context of lesbian historiography, can be fingered. Similarly, in her discussion of 'reading as an erotic activity' (Farina, 2006, 7), Farina points out that 'texts animate the flesh' (Farina, 2006, 2) and warns against extricating the senses, especially the touch, from any account of medieval textuality, readerly practices and present encounters with the relics of the past. Reading and touching, and indeed other sensory encounters such as smelling and tasting, cannot, therefore, be disentangled.

This queer, specifically lesbian, historiography informs the queer philology that we are putting forward as a new methodology for manuscript studies. Indebted to Seth Lerer's reflections on comparative philology as founded on genealogical relations (Lerer, 2003) and, more profoundly, to Carla Freccero's queer reading of philology as 'phallogog[y]' (Freccero, 1994, 120) or as a discipline imbricated with the discourse of heteronormativity and masculinist epistemologies, Jeffrey Masten

(2016) also advocates for queer philologies. In line with our Special Issue, his study ‘seeks to practice a more labile, deconstructive history of sexuality and sexual meaning ... and a historicism attentive to alterity *and* continuity’ (Masten, 2016, 36). By focusing on the sensual materiality of the manuscript surface, the touch between past and present, as well as the pleasures elicited by errors, deviances and gaps, this Special Issue forges its own queer trajectory: from Magnani and Watt’s scrambling of patriarchal paradigms of canon formation through Jonathan Hsy’s and Malte Urban’s pieces on networks and rhizomes, to conclude with the trans and lesbian historiography with which M.W. Bychowski, Lucy Allen and Anna Kłosowska engage. As the material space of the medieval codex is always already a site of hermeneutic slippage, applying queer theory to the study of medieval textuality is not anachronistic; quite the opposite: it is the fulfilment of the queer temporality of medieval manuscripts, always realized and reified as palimpsests, as *mouvance*, as variance, as queer.

Queer Manuscripts

In the first article in this Special Issue, Magnani and Watt return to the relationship between Chaucer and Gower, focusing specifically on the legend of Constance, which is retold in *Confessio Amantis*, and also in *The Canterbury Tales* as the Man of Law’s Tale. Magnani and Watt are particularly interested in thinking through what these two versions of the same narrative, as they appear in specific manuscript witnesses (the Ellesmere manuscript and a number of related codices, and the Fairfax and Bodley manuscripts of *Confessio Amantis*), reveal about the ways in which these poets, and their readers, might be experimenting with ideas of authority and interpretation. In Gower’s Tale of Constance and the Man of Law’s Tale the representation and

policing of ‘unkynde abhomynacions’ appears to be the central concern of the narrative; such ‘abhomynacions’ define queerness as the capacious space of the non-linear and the dissonant, as it comprises not only sexual ‘errors’ such as rape and incest alongside the female masculinity of the two mothers-in-law and Constance/Custance’s virile resistance to rape, but also an overt concern with the heteronormative structures of literary authority and the surveillance of its futurity. In Magnani and Watt’s reading, the glosses and *mise-en-page* of the manuscripts are no longer marginal or incidental to literary analysis. Also, the relationship between text and paratext is no longer figured in oppositional terms, that is, as a masculinist ‘rivalry’ between culturally sanctioned and unsanctioned readings, as they argue that the queer is ubiquitous and can even be found in hegemonic spaces. ‘Abhomynacions’ are wounds on the surface of the codex that excoriate the ‘one-ness’ of authority and hermeneutics; nonetheless, as they do so, errors open disjunctures in which the pleasure of queer misprision, of being cast adrift, can be performed and experienced. Magnani and Watt argue that both Gower, Chaucer and indeed some of their readers—as revealed through the glossing of Gower’s English text, and the glossing Chaucer’s manuscripts—are acutely aware of the risks, and sometimes the pleasures, of misprision or queer (mis)interpretation.

Attention to the work of Chaucer is also found in Hsy’s essay although here the focus is on a much shorter poem, *Adam Scrivyen*, and shifts from looking solely at manuscripts to consideration of some print versions as well as making reference to one example of the text’s digital afterlife. *Adam Scrivyen* is riven by anxieties about the relationships between poet and scribe, authority and error, and, crucially, about the very processes of composition and manuscript dissemination. Responding to Dinshaw’s feminist reading of the poem which focuses on the gendering of the

manuscript, figured in bodily terms (Dinshaw, 1989, 3-14), Hsy draws out the homosocial dynamics of the poem, arguing that the scribe, Adam, can also be understood as a victim, and also that the poem itself embodies fragility and failure. In so doing, Hsy critiques paleographic studies that claim to uncover the ‘real’ identity of ‘Adam Scrivyen’, and looks at alternative approaches to transcribing and editing the poem. His reflections on the relationship between reader and manuscript in terms of encounters between the human and non-human culminate in a consideration of the ways that digital interfaces can disrupt the tendency to endow agency only upon humans, and specifically on men, and can thus queer ideas of authority and prevailing dynamics of power.

Adopting a rather different methodology and critical framework, Urban’s article nevertheless also sets out to overturn established assumptions and paradigms. Urban brings our attention back to Gower and *Confessio Amantis*, and to the limits of traditional philology, codicology and textual criticism, which, through the creation of genealogies and the elimination of error, try to reign in and control the very variance, the *queerness* of manuscript textuality that Urban sees as constitutive of medieval literature. He finds that queer theorizations of temporality offer a useful framework through which to understand the complex ways in which manuscripts coexist and relate to one another, and to the reader, in the here and now. Urban outlines the intricate textual history of this long poem, of which many full manuscripts and fragments have been preserved. Although the text is surprisingly stable overall, different and apparently equally authorial versions of the poem survive. As Urban points out, traditional textual editing cannot satisfactorily address the sheer volume of witnesses and variant readings, even if many of these appear (on the surface at least) quite minor and incidental. Urban contends that *Confessio Amantis* is a poem that is

inherently polyvocal and he traces the queer temporalities that he sees as defining it. He ends his article by calling for a queer editing of *Confessio Amantis* that exploits digital technologies in order to emphasize that heterogeneity, variance, and asynchronicity at the heart of the poem.

Bychowski's essay, which signals a return to the manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, also explores the physical materiality of the medieval codex. Bychowski draws out striking parallels between the medieval manuscript, which is literally written on animal skin, and the experiences of the transsexual in the present day in order to explore the idea of trans textuality. Bychowski's reflections on trans time and space, on depth, and on the dysphoric inner touch are mirrored in the processes of transition and transformation that result in the production of the manuscript and that continue with its ongoing use. Bychowski focuses on Fragment IV of *The Canterbury Tales* in the Ellesmere manuscript, and specifically on the illuminated manuscript portraits of the Physician and the Pardoner on the recto sides of the manuscripts, which are seen to 'bleed' through the vellum to the verso sides. These images are read alongside the accompanying lines of text, which are also concerned with manifestations of the body, from the chaste physicality of the Physician's daughter, Virginia, to the corrupt and decaying fleshliness excoriated in the Pardoner's diatribe. While, as Bychowski suggests, trans textuality may superficially appear to be simply 'a moment of anachronism', it offers a highly innovative approach to the study of medieval manuscripts and their queer (non-linear) temporality.

From trans to lesbian-like philology, an alternative but rather complementary approach to Urban's queering of Gower manuscripts is adopted by Allen in her essay on the Tale of Tereus in *Confessio Amantis* and Cambridge University Library MS Ff.

1. 6, otherwise known as the Findern manuscript, an anthology of religious and secular verse compiled in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Like Urban, Allen is concerned with thinking through ways of recognizing and making sense of the sheer complexity of manuscript history, although her concern is not with the limits of conceptualizing relationships between witnesses in terms of genealogy and lineage, but with understanding and acknowledging the importance of collaboration in manuscript production. Allen argues that collaborative production and female same-sex desire are intrinsically linked. Her reading of the fragment of Gower's *Tale of Tereus* that appears in the Findern manuscript illustrates that the narrative was subtly adapted for a presumed female audience in a way that renders it lesbian or lesbian-like and that complements other texts found in the anthology with a demonstrable focus on female same-sex sexuality. As Allen explains, it is 'female collaboration' that 'allows us to recognize a moment of lesbian-like desire' and she goes on to draw evocative parallels with the lesbian-like collaboration of female scribes in the production of some of the texts copied into the Findern manuscript itself.

If the first five articles in this Special Issue have been preoccupied with Chaucer and Gower's queer manuscripts and the medieval English literary canon, then the final essay signals a change in direction as it turns to the manuscripts and early printed texts of medieval and early modern France. Kłosowska's expansive survey provides a fitting end to this Special Issue on queer manuscripts in its exploration of trans, sodomy and the premodern lesbian in a wide range of early religious, scientific and literary texts, from hagiographies of Desert Mothers and Merovingian saints through to romance and poetry. Kłosowska argues that medieval trans is pervasive in the writing of the later Middle Ages and thus the opposite of an anachronism. Kłosowska goes on to illustrate through an exploration of astrological

treatises that gender variance was very much seen as a natural phenomenon.

Recognition of lesbian subject positions is also present, according to Kłosowska, in seventeenth-century fortune games and sixteenth-century sonnets, not hidden away but visible and public. As Kłosowska observes, premodern manuscripts and printed texts prove to be ‘a rich habitat for trans, fluidity and queerness in life and fiction’.

Kłosowska’s closing observations resonate with the preceding articles in this Special Issue when she notes that the concept of *mouvance* is common both to the fluidity of trans and queer identities and to manuscript studies, rooted as it is in textual variance and mobility. Periodization itself and the arbitrary boundary between the labile categories of ‘medieval’ and ‘early modern’ are also helpfully scrutinised and exploded by Kłosowska’s harnessing of queer, and specifically trans, temporality.

The Futures of Queer Philology

The articles in this Special Issue arose out of some of the papers that were delivered in two sessions on ‘Queer Manuscripts’ at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, UK, in July 2015, in two roundtables on ‘The Textuality of Error’ at the New Chaucer Society Biennial Congress, London, UK, in July 2016, and in two sessions on ‘The Queer Textuality of Gower and his Contemporaries’ at the Early Book Society/John Gower Society Conference, University of Durham, UK, in July 2017. Alongside the authors of the articles in this Special Issue, speakers at these panels included Angela Bennett (University of Nevada, Reno), Vicki Blud (University of York, UK), Emma Campbell (University of Warwick, UK), Catherine S. Cox (University of Pittsburgh), Kathleen E. Kennedy (Penn State Brandywine), Dorothy Kim (Vassar College, New York), Miriamne Ara Krummel (University of Dayton), Amy Louise Morgan (University of Surrey, UK), Sara Petrosillo (Franklin

& Marshall College), Samantha Katz Seal (University of New Hampshire), James C. Staples (New York University), and Zachary Stone (University of Virginia). While it was not possible to publish articles arising from all of this research in the current Special Issue, we are immensely grateful to all of these scholars for their innovative and academically-rigorous presentations, and for the stimulating intellectual exchanges that ensued. The sheer number of contributors to these sessions illustrates what a vibrant, generative and timely topic 'Queer Manuscripts' proves to be.

Papers in these various sessions focused on individual manuscripts, such as the Huntingdon Library MS HM 114 (Petrosillo), British Library MS Harley 2382 (Krummel), British Library Cotton Nero A.X (Staples) and University of Nottingham MS WLC/LM/6 (Campbell), on compilations (Seal) and miscellanies (Kennedy), on the material space of the codex (Cox, Blud), and on the queerness of print at the end of the Middle Ages (Stone). The sessions revealed something of the range of interdisciplinary scholarship that the idea of 'Queer Manuscripts' generates. For example, the sessions at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds included two papers that paid particular attention to the relationships between manuscript illustrations and texts: Bennett's 'Queering Medieval Manuscripts: Anachronism, Asynchrony, and Agency' and Morgan's '(Mis)Representations of Queerness in Medieval Manuscript Illuminations'. The queer relationship between the visual and the verbal is one of immense importance to medieval studies today, as is indicated by Robert Mills's ground-breaking and already hugely-influential study *Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages*, in which he examines 'the relationship between sodomy and motifs of vision and visibility in medieval culture, on the one hand, and those categories we today call "gender" and "sexuality," on the other' (Mills, 2015, 10). A very different disciplinary mix was brought into play by Kim, who spoke about 'Queering the Boy-

Singer and Gendering Noise in the Vernon Manuscript'. Kim's paper threw new light on the anti-semitism of Chaucer's *Prioresses Tale* by combining manuscript study, musicology and textual criticism, while paying close attention of critical race theory. This is a fascinating approach, but one that is, unfortunately, still all too likely to receive negative critiques, if the controversy over Elizabeth Eva Leach's work on gender and medieval music theory is anything to go by (see Leach 2006a, Leach 2006b, Fuller, 2011 and Leach 2011). Continuing conservative resistance to new ideas makes the risk-taking and experimental work of scholars such as Kim as well as Leach all the more urgent. In the context of the on-going debates about misogyny and white supremacy within medieval studies that continue to play out on social media and within conferences as well as in print and peer review (see, for example, Cohen, 2016; and Kim, 2017), we hope that this Special Issue will encourage further work within the area of queer manuscript study and queer philology. Our work advocates firmly for an interdisciplinary and inclusive approach and that attends carefully to issues of gender as well as sexuality, including trans and intersex, and to disability, race, and global perspectives more broadly.

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